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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, July 7, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Summer Comfort." Information approved by the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Not so far in the future, so the engineers and architects and house builders tell us--not so far in the future we'll be refrigerating or cooling our homes in summer just as we heat them in winter. And that will mean that whether the mercury climbs sky high or drops below zero, whether it's July or December, our houses will be kept at a pleasant temperature.

But that's the future. Meanwhile we have to live in the present. Cousin Susan has been in a state of nerves for two days because someone told her a heat wave was predicted. Uncle Ebenezer has tried in vain to convince her that a cold snap is coming instead. She's resigned herself to being prostrated by heat. Just waiting for the blow to fall.

So we've been considering at our house some of the ways to make life comfortable on hot days, some of the simple little ways to fool the weather.

A comfortable atmosphere depends on three things. First, the right temperature. Second, the right amount of moisture in the air. And third, the movement of air.

Well, we can't do much about it if the mercury takes a notion to climb. And we can't do much to change the amount of moisture in the atmosphere. But, even so, there's no use giving up in despair like cousin Susan. For there's the third point in a comfortable atmosphere - movement or circulation of air or ventilation - whatever you want to call it.

Everybody enjoys a breeze on a hot day. So keep your house ready to catch and welcome every stray breeze that comes along. And if nature doesn't provide a breeze, you can supply your own with the aid of an electric fan.

Uncle Ebenezer used to say that he scarcely got forty winks of sleep a night from June to September because his upstairs bedroom was so hot. All the rooms on the second floor of our house were inclined to be hot until we discovered the cause. It was the attic above, an attic all closed up tight and just filled with hot, still air. Once we put screens in the attic windows and opened them up so there was a draft, the atmosphere not only in the attic but also on the second floor became much cooler.

While we're on this subject of ventilating bedrooms, maybe we'd better mention that every sleeping room needs cross-ventilation to be comfortable and healthful. Windows on two sides of the room, if possible, or, at least, a window and a door on opposite sides of the room to draw the air across. It's also a great help to have windows opened both at the top and the bottom.

What was that? Did I hear somebody say "Mosquitoes"? You don't have to worry about mosquitoes coming along with the breeze, if your windows have full-length screens.

The night is a good time to air out the house, to fill it with a cool fresh atmosphere. Isn't it fortunate that nobody nowadays believes that awful superstition about night air being unhealthy? Think of all the uncomfortable, hot, stuffy summer nights people used to endure because they were afraid of night air. The cool of the evening is a fine time to throw open all the windows and doors throughout the house, and let the air go through.

If you don't believe in the value of moving air as a comfort measure, here's an experiment for you to try. Some day when the temperature is eighty or above, try spending an hour in some place where the air is perfectly still. See if you don't find the heat stifling. Then, with the mercury registering at the same point, try a place where there's a good breeze blowing. A little of that and you'll probably decide that the weather isn't uncomfortably hot after all.

What's the reason? It's because there is more evaporation from the body surface in the presence of moving air than in the presence of still air. And the more rapid the evaporation, the cooler you feel.

. If you have an electric fan--large, small or medium-sized--you'll find it the greatest help toward comfort and very useful in many different ways. Even a ten or twelve-inch fan can be carried about quite easily. My friend Mary Andrews calls her electric fan "Mary's little lamb." She explains that everywhere Mary goes that fan is sure to go. It follows her into the kitchen when she's getting meals on hot days, into her laundry when she's ironing, into her bedroom when the night is hot and not a breath of air is s stirring. In fact, she declares that it's her constant companion whether she reads, works or just sits.

A fan is useful for a surprising lot of household chores. You can put it to work airing out the small clothes closets. It does the job fast and well. You can put it to work drying out a dress or some other garment that you have washed and want to iron in a hurry. A fan will help dry the white shoes you've just cleaned or the shoes that got wet in a thunderstorm, and even a small fan makes a fine ventilator for your kitchen window. It stands on a small shelf built across the window toward the top. Of course, it's facing out and it does a fine job of carrying off odors from the kitchen when the window is open at the top.

Maybe you're one of those people who don't enjoy drafts. In that case your fan can stand up on a high shelf where the breeze won't be thrown directly on you, but will keep the air circulating. A high shelf has another advantage. The fan is then out of reach of small curious fingers that might otherwise come to grief.

Perhaps you've noticed also that in hospitals the fans are placed on the floor. Then the current doesn't strike the patient in bed but does help to cool off the room.

But the room in the house that most of us housekeepers would like to keep cool in summer is the kitchen. As we said, a fan in a kitchen window is one big help. It creates a circulation that carries the warm air rising from the range which will be carried to the window. The cooler air from the rest of the room and from outdoors replaces the warm air.

Of course, the kind of fuel used has a great deal to do with the heat of the kitchen.

A well-insulated oven is a big help. Good insulation reduces the heat loss from the oven. Most of the heat is held in the oven and comparatively little gets out into the room.

Cooking on top of the stove presents another problem. The idea here is to use the heat produced to cook the food rather than to increase the heat in the kitchen.

Cooking utensils can be of help, too. I don't mean that you have to have special utensils for summer cooking. Dear me, no. I just mean to try at this season to use the utensils you already have that will aid in the problem of heat control. For one thing, see that your pots and kettles fit the heating element you are using, whether it's electricity, gas, coal, wood or oil. A flame that extends beyond the edge of the pan doesn't help cook the food but does add to the heat of the kitchen.

Generally--except where you want liquid to evaporate very quickly--you gain nothing by letting food boil violently. Water boiling rapidly isn't a bit hotter than water boiling gently. Bring the food to a boil, then reduce the heat to a point where the food is kept boiling gently. That's a matter of summer comfort and economy of fuel as well.

If you own some of those pans that come in sets of 2 or 3--I believe they're called duplicate or triplicate saucepans--anyway, if you own some of these you can cook several foods over one burner. And your steam pressure cooker--that's another good warm weather utensil. It cooks food thoroughly with a minimum of heat and time.

. Planning your meals for cool kitchens helps too. Since oven cooking is about the warmest method any baking is best done in the cool of the day. Cold meats, pan-broiled meats, quickly cooked vegetables, salads and fresh fruits - these are good hot weather choices.

And keep the service simple too. No extra frills to tire the housekeeper out in summer or to keep her in the kitchen long hours..

Friday: "A Summer Luncheon."